

Pioneer Press, June 8, 2006

When someone suffers a traumatic injury in a car crash or another accident, the first hour of care the patient receives - referred by some as the Golden Hour - often makes the difference between life and death.

Hospital officials for Libertyville-based Condell Medical Center say the need to provide high quality medical care to patients during the first few critical minutes following an emergency is why the hospital hopes to become the first Level 1 Trauma Center in Lake County.

Condell President and CEO Dennis Millirons announced Monday the hospital has applied to the Illinois Health Facilities Board for a proposed \$25 million emergency department expansion and Level 1 Trauma Center, during an event attended by approximately 150 hospital officials and staff, state lawmakers and local officials.

Life threatening

If completed, Condell will be the destination for victims of life-threatening injuries in traffic accidents in Lake County, rather than Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Evanston Hospital or Froedtert Hospital in Milwaukee, said Millirons.

"The real benefit is to be able to intervene faster and save more lives," he said.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-10th, of Highland Park, one of the speaker's at Monday's event, said Condell's decision to seek Level 1 Trauma status makes "good sense" and is "urgently needed."

"The current situation makes no common sense," he said. "If you or a loved one are injured in

accident, you have leave Lake County for Level 1 care."

Hospital officials say Condell's central location in Libertyville makes it a perfect location in the county for a Level 1 Trauma Center. They say the hospital can be reached by ambulance within 25 minutes from anywhere in the county and already has a helicopter-landing pad.

When completed, the expanded Trauma 1 emergency department would more than double the existing treatment bays from 25 to 47, improve treatment times and have in-house trauma teams available around the clock to treat patients, a hospital release says. The proposed expansion also will include the addition of 90 private rooms.

Dr. Mark Kadowaki, trauma director at Condell Medical Center, said the county's rapid growth in population, which now stands at around 700,000, dictates the need for a Level 1 Trauma facility. In addition, he said Lake County is a popular destination for visitors with popular tourist attractions like Great America and Gurnee Mills.

Emergency room visits at Condell grew by more than 14 percent from 2004 to 2005 and is expected to increase by another 10 percent this year.

"This is really a service the community needs and requires," said Kadowaki.

Higher Level

Condell is currently a Level 2 Trauma Center. The major difference is the proposed Level 1 Trauma Center would be staffed by on-site 24 hour-a-day trauma surgeons instead of physicians on call and able to respond within 30 minutes. The new facility also would have special, high-level trauma training for nurses and staff and increased surgical and non-surgical services such as 24-hour radiology and anesthesia.

Susan Thompson, director of public relations and marketing for Condell, said the hospital intends to borrow the money to pay for the expansion project. Thompson said Condell does not plan to raise its rates to pay for the expansion.

Millirons said the Illinois Health Facilities Planning Board is expected to hold a hearing on Condell's application in July.